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ABSTRACT

A discussion of English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teaching focuses on the relationship of lexical items to the syntactic situations in which they may occur, and the importance of teaching this relationship to language learners. First, common errors made by ESL students that are attributable to lack of syntactic context knowledge are identified. Included are these error types: verb + preposition, adjective + preposition, noun + preposition; transitive vs. intransitive verbs; direct objects; causatives; verb + complement(s); and connectors. Then the usefulness of some specific current ESL reference books and texts to inform teachers and students of this aspect of lexicon is discussed. These include dictionaries, handbooks of usage, and textbooks. Finally, ways in which the classroom teacher can present this important but difficult-to-generalize information are examined, using specific situations and possible alternative classroom treatments. A number of overhead masters used in presentation of the paper are included, and the handout offered is appended. (MSE)

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Beyond Vocabulary: What's New in the Lexicon

by Roberta Abraham, Mary Barratt, and Barbara Matthies

ED 376 709

Introduction

Dr. Roberta Abraham is a professor of English who enjoys teaching grammar/syntax courses, Dr. Barbara Matthies is the director of the Intensive English and Orientation Program at Iowa State University and author of the teacher's guide to the Azar grammar series, and Dr. Mary Barratt is an ESL teacher with 19 years experience in the U.S. and abroad.

Abraham

Several years ago while I was teaching advanced composition to ESL graduate students, it occurred to me that a large number of ESL grammatical errors at this level of proficiency could be explained as "lexical-syntactic," i.e., the students had used perfectly good words that fit well with their topics, but they had not surrounded them with appropriate grammatical structures. For example, on a paper relating a personal experience, a student wrote:

> **After the crash, I was flied four meters away from my motorcycle.**

In this case, the student certainly might have *flown*, but, probably because he wanted to show that something happened to him , (rather than that he had initiated an action), he used the intransitive verb *fly* in the nonexistent passive form. One solution to this problem would have been to select a different verb of motion, e.g., *throw*, that is transitive and can be used in passive sentences (I was thrown four

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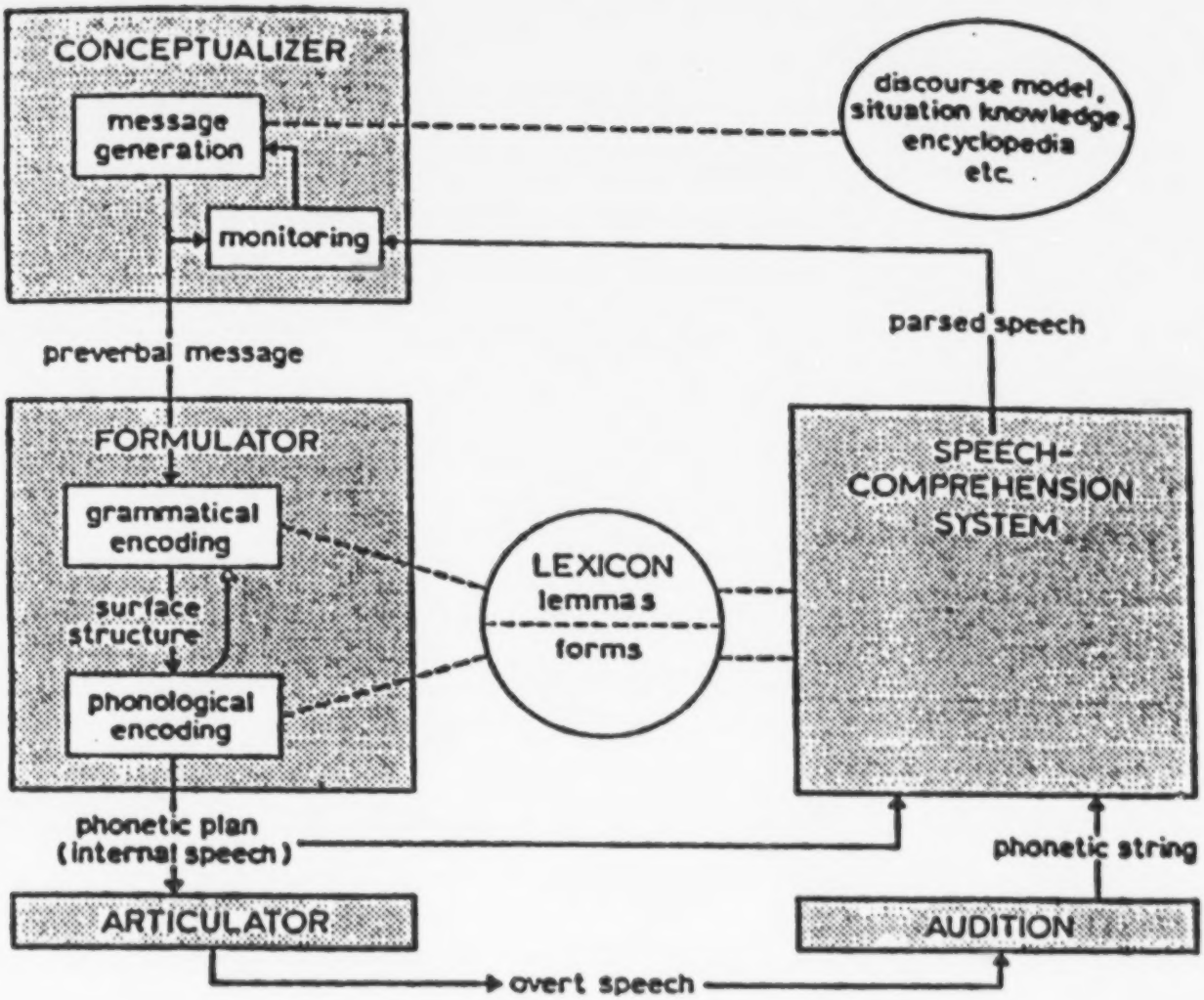
meters...). While the student clearly conveyed his meaning with *was flied*, his sentence, and other errors of this type, are unacceptable in academic English, unfortunately projecting a poor image of the writer and his general academic abilities.

I filed this little observation away and it lay dormant until last spring when I heard David Wilkins speak at AAAL on the importance of the lexicon in second language processing and acquisition. Wilkins noted that, in the past, both language teaching and linguistic study focused primarily on syntax. In recent years, teachers and researchers have become more interested in the acquisition of the lexicon, but still, there has been a tendency to regard lexical acquisition as limited or self-contained, for example looking at word families (e.g., *believe*, *believable*, *belief* ,etc.) or words in a given domain (e.g., *house*, *kitchen*, *stove*, *sink*, *living room*, *sofa*, *chair*, etc). Wilkins felt that this was too narrow a view--that the lexicon was closely related to syntax , and that the lexical items should be considered together with the syntactic frames in which they can occur.

There is certainly theoretical support for such a view. Wilkins referred to a model for speaking developed by psycholinguist Willem Levelt in which the syntax of a sentence to be spoken is formulated only after the *words* the speaker wishes to be used have been retrieved:
SEE OVERHEAD 1

A message is generated in the "conceptualizer." - no words, just an idea. This preverbal message sent to "formulator" for grammatical encoding. The Speaker first retrieves "lemmas" (meaning and

Overhead 1



Levelt's Model of Speech Production
(1989)

syntactical information associated with a word) from the Lexicon that match the preverbal message. The syntax associated with the word is used in building the syntax of the sentence.

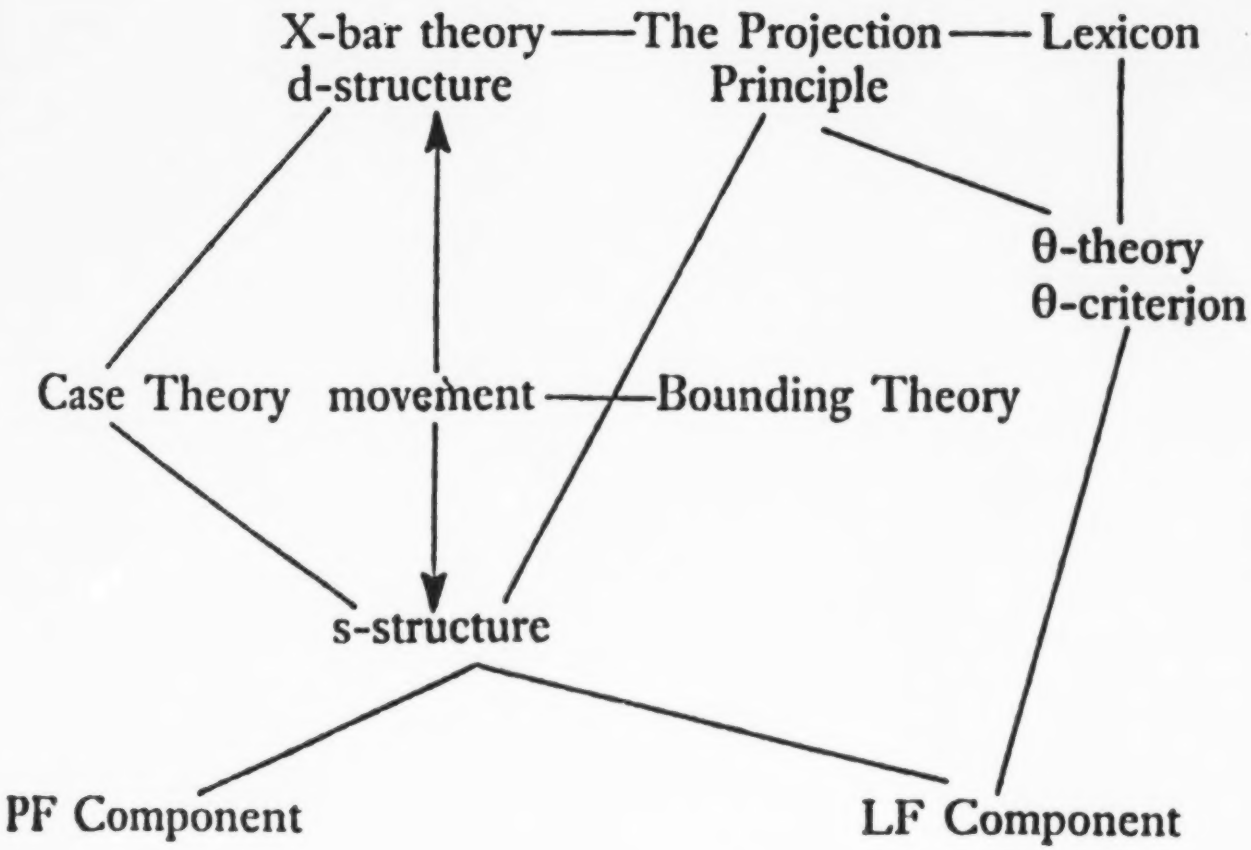
Likewise, Chomsky in his recent Government Binding model places the lexicon in a position of prominence:

SEE OVERHEAD 2

Of interest here are the Lexicon and the Projection Principle. The "Projection principle" states that information (including syntactic information) from the lexicon is "projected" to all levels of syntax (including d-structure and s-structure); the result is that the syntactic relationships required by a particular lexical item must be retained throughout the derivation of the sentence. In other words, one's choice of words is important in determining the form of the sentence.

Following the direction set by these theoretical models and David Wilkins' suggestion that they have something to say to teachers of English, I would first like to elaborate on the types of errors that ESL students make which can be attributed to their not knowing or remembering the syntax associated with lexical items. Next, Barbara Matthies will discuss the usefulness of some current ESL reference books and ESL texts in informing teachers and students about this aspect of lexical information, and finally, Mary Barratt will talk about how the classroom teacher can deal with this important, but hard-to-generalize information. After we've all finished, we'd welcome your comments and questions.

Overhead 2



Model of Chomsky's Government & Binding Theory (from V. J. Cook, 1988)

Before I introduce various types of lexical-syntactic problems that ESL students have, I would like to mention several types of problems that are either *not* of this variety or that, while perhaps in this general category, will not be dealt with here.

1. Errors that result from failure to apply general syntactic principles: word order, subject-verb agreement, use of *be* before predicate adjectives ("he was interested," not "he interested"), etc.

2. Errors that result from failure to apply general semantic principles, e.g., the distinction between *interested/interesting*, *bored/boring*, *confused/confusing* etc.

3. Errors involving word *form*:, e.g., a noun instead a verb, an adjective instead of a noun, etc. (They are afraid they will be *insaned*).

The categories of lexical-syntactic problems which we *will* consider are the following (almost all taken from actual student errors).

SEE OVERHEAD 3

There are other examples on your handout.

Now we'll hear from Barbara Matthies about how well current ESL reference and textbooks deal with these problems.

Matthies

Resources

For my part of this presentation, I want to review three types of resources you the teacher might consult whenever you come across a structure that causes special problems for one or more of your learners. These are 1) dictionaries, 2) handbooks, and 3) textbooks. I might add a fourth resource that I use a lot: my fellow teachers.

Overhead 3

Verb + Preposition (and less frequently, Adjective + Preposition, Noun + Preposition)

Prep omitted

When I arrived America two years ago

They can also cooperate each other.

Wrong prep.

Once they had meeting to discuss on a program.

I will get my Ph.D. and after devote myself in research.

Prep. used when it should not be

We have the power to face to reality.

Adjective + wrong preposition

Some parts we're not very glad with.

Noun + wrong preposition

an instructor on organic chemis'try

Transitive vs. Intransitive Verbs

Direct object omitted

I can give the reason why I choose.

He sat on his throne and began to regret.

Direct object used with intransitive verb

The airplane crashed the mountain.

The fishermen from several harbours didn't fish anything at all.

Intransitive verb used as passive

My purpose of living is coincided with an old Chinese idiom.

They were anxious about an accident which might be happened.

Passive stative verb used as intransitive

There is a small country which locates far away in the north.

Indirect Objects

Dative movement should be blocked

I said you "good morning."

Explain me how to do this problem.

Causatives

It's science that makes the world we live developed so rapidly.

The government will either lead the country well or caused the country into poor country.

Verb + Complements

Make sure your money.

I like study new language.

Connectors

I love to play it in spite of its popularity has gone.

Because that I want to create something.

Sometimes they can provide a rule or example that is just right for my learners to understand, and my search stops there.

The kinds of lexical-syntactic problems Roberta has identified are not often dealt with in textbooks because they are somewhat unpredictable. Their cause might be some attempt by the learners to transfer a pattern from their native language into English, in which case knowledge of both languages would be necessary in order to construct a satisfactory explanation. Most ESL textbooks are written for learners from many native language backgrounds, so it is impossible to treat all of their transferences. More often, I find the source of errors to be that students have learned a suitable structure in English but have tried to graft onto it some word or phrase that follows a different set of rules. It's like grafting a branch of a nut tree onto a fruit tree--it almost never produces a satisfactory hybrid. (Sorry for the agricultural talk, but we're from Iowa, you know!)

SEE OVERHEAD 4

Dictionaries

So, when a student's unexpected choice of word or phrase throws the sentence into chaos, where do we turn for a quick fix? The learner's first impulse is to look in a dictionary for all truth and guidance. Let's begin there in our search for some possible help. I am focussing on dictionaries that are written specifically for the learner of English. One that has been in use a long time is Hornby's *Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, listed on your handout. In our Intensive English Program, we recommend the *Longman Dictionary of American English*,

Overhead 4

Lexical - syntactic errors caused by:

a. L1 --> L2 transfer

b. half-learned rules
(grafting a word onto
an inappropriate structure)

Results:

rather unpredictable errors

few "quick fixes"

at least for the intermediate levels, so I'll talk about that one.

The classic problem in using any dictionary is knowing how to look something up in it. If your problem is spelling, then you are lost if you don't know at least the first two or three consonants and vowels in the basic form of the word you are seeking. The situation is much worse if your problem is the lexico-syntactic one we are dealing with: Which part of the faulty phrase or sentence is the real culprit, and how do you find it in the alphabetical arrangement of a dictionary? Take, for example, the problem in this sentence from a student's paper:

> **My purpose of living is coincided with an old Chinese idiom.**

The teacher will probably note that the main problem is the phrase "is coincided with," then perhaps also suggest that the words "idiom" and "of" could be replaced by more precise equivalents. You might explain, for example, that changing the last phrase to "an old Chinese *saying* or *proverb*" would be preferable; then the student could look up those synonyms and choose one. Here, the teacher has played the role of thesaurus, which is not a type of reference book that we usually suggest for learners (although I once started to write one for ESOL students). But, by offering a choice of synonyms, you have narrowed the student's search while allowing some flexibility in the final revision.

The main problem in the student's sentence, however, is in the verb phrase "is coincided with." Does a dictionary for learners provide any help for this kind of error? Both of the dictionaries I've listed do

tend to focus on the English verb phrase as a major source of errors, so they have elaborate categories to help the user choose an appropriate structure. Let's look up the entry for *coincide*:

> **"[I with] . . . . 2 (of ideas, opinions, etc.) to be in agreement: My religious beliefs don't coincide with yours."**

This does indeed give the alert student some help. In the first place, the capital letter *I* in this dictionary indicates that this verb is intransitive. The student who has discovered the existence of Study Notes throughout this dictionary may look up *intransitive* or *verb* and be referred to page 745, where there is a page of notes and illustrations on the difference between transitive and intransitive verbs. Unfortunately, nowhere is there a hint that intransitive verbs cannot occur in a passive form, which is really the crux of the problem in our example. So, the teacher might still need to remind the student about the connection between passive voice and transitive verbs.

You can see from this how limited and even misleading a dictionary entry by itself can be. We need to persuade some students that consulting a dictionary is only the first step toward understanding how to build a word into a phrase or sentence that correctly conveys the intended meaning.

Handbooks

Another type of resource to turn to is the handbook of usage. Some of these are meant for classroom use, but the most useful ones

for the teacher are the rather large reference grammars, some of which are listed on the handout.

For the ESOL teacher, the handbooks that are written for use in American high school and college composition classes are not very appropriate. They simply do not focus on the types of errors and pitfalls that plague the learner of English as a foreign language. For example, they neglect most features of the verb system and tend to concentrate on rather trivial problems like the difference between *sit* and *set* or *who* and *whom*.

As with dictionaries, the main problem in using a handbook lies in knowing how to look things up. Every author has a well-thought-out system of organizing the complex sets of English structures and usage, and often this results in some terminology that is unique to that author.

For example, *Grammar Troublespots* by Ann Raimes organizes typical errors in written English into a number of troublespots, but in lumping things together and treating them with brief rules of thumb, she neglects to caution the learner about the pitfalls of choosing one lexical item rather than another from the list of words that seem to fit a particular pattern. (I've given an example of this on the handout, which you can refer to later.)

One book that introduces teachers to some grammatical terminology as well as some hints for explaining features of English lexico-syntactic usage is *The Grammar Book* by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman. Although it does cover most of the troublesome

structures that Roberta mentioned, it is not organized like a handbook, which makes it very difficult for anyone to dig out a succinct and useful explanation for repairing a particular error.

The handbook I have most often turned to for almost 30 years is Crowell's *Index to Modern English*, which is still in print and is listed on your handout. The author had obviously had long experience with the English patterns of learners, especially those struggling with written expression, because all of the problems Roberta has mentioned are treated, as well as a few matters of spelling and even pronunciation. The alphabetical arrangement is like the typical handbook, and I later added a more detailed index to the book which includes many of the lexical items used in the explanations. Once you know how to use this book, you will discover a treasure of clear, concise rules of usage and good examples to build into your lessons.

Another helpful book for the teacher, which is unfortunately now out of print, is *The Gooficon*. It spotlights just a few of the trouble spots in English, calling them "goofs" when learners misuse them. The crossover from lexical to syntactic errors is mentioned, and most sections include notes for the teacher to consider in planning lessons on these points.

Perhaps the most complete and sophisticated source of help is a series of books by the British team of Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik. These books range from an exhaustive 1100-page compendium of the syntactic patterns of English to a much shorter handbook arranged partially by communicative notions and functions

and partially by grammatical patterns. Some of these books are keyed to each other by using parallel numbering of sections, which helps in locating additional information or examples. None of them are really suitable for the learner because there is simply too much information presented too concisely. However, they are gold mines of examples and explanations for teachers, who may then develop their own lessons and exercises to suit their students.

All of the troublesome syntactic patterns that Roberta mentioned are dealt with in these books, some in more detail than others. One shortcoming, though, is that lexical items are not listed as such in the indexes. To return to my earlier example, one would not find explanations for any of the individual words or phrases, such as *idiom*, or *coincide with*. However, the problem of trying to passivize an intransitive verb is handled succinctly under the heading of "Voice: Active and passive":

> **"The distinction between active and passive applies only to sentences where the verb is transitive." (Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990, p. 44)**

Thus, the teacher's first step must be to isolate the student's error, then identify one or more correct alternatives, and finally locate in a reference book the category or terminology used for those alternative structures. With luck, one of the relevant sections will contain examples and a clear explanation of the structure to replace the student's flawed attempt.

Textbooks

If all of this is too time-consuming, then the final strategy to consider is to find a textbook that anticipates most of the difficulties that your students will have in expressing themselves clearly and correctly in English.

I have found that most textbooks that focus on vocabulary do not deal with the syntactic requirements of apparently synonymous expressions. They tend to present concrete nouns, descriptive adjectives, and action verbs without cautioning about their associated syntactic features.

Grammar textbooks are usually more helpful for teaching syntactic as well as some lexical structures. You might be familiar with the series of grammar textbooks by Betty Azar, which have been popular for many years. (Also, *The Advanced Grammar Book* by Steer and Carlisi has a similar format and is one of the few textbooks that treats directly some of the lexical-syntactic patterns that Roberta mentioned.) For the second editions of the Azar books, I was asked to write the Teacher's Guides. These offer much more than a simple answer key or list of techniques for presenting the lessons. They also include notes on some features of the language that often lead learners to create non-idiomatic expressions. However, both Betty and I realized that there was no way to put all of our collective experience of teaching grammar into these books. The best we could do was organize and point out regularities, add cautions about a few predictable problem structures, and then assume that the competent

teacher will be able to lead the responsible learner toward enlightenment, hoping that in the process they will discover insights together.

Now, Mary Barratt will give us more strategies for the classroom teacher trying to deal with the "lemmas" and dilemmas of English language teaching.

Barratt

The teacher's role

I think that English language teachers might say that this topic per se is not one that we have spent much time thinking about in our teaching. However, if we reflect on it for a few minutes, we will realize that we do face this topic over and over again in our classrooms.

It starts with that moment early in the semester when we are asked by just about any level language learner to explain the difference between "say "and "tell". If we have dealt with particular questions before, we can pull out our "standard lecture" on that topic and supply a number of examples illustrating the use of the structure.

However, at times we are asked a question or read a student's sentence in which something is wrong but we can't quite figure out what it is that is wrong, or what would be better, or if anything would be better yet not require drastic changes. Then we are on the spot. We can hardly say, "It just doesn't sound right!" So we ask ourselves what we can tell the student about the error that is simple, true and doesn't force major revision. We also have to judge whether the topic is

something that should be discussed with the entire class. When a question comes up from material that the whole class is studying, we clearly have to engage the group in the explanation.

I believe that when questions about the use of and restrictions on lexical items come up in class, three things can happen.

SEE OVERHEAD 5

Situation 1 : If we know how to answer the question or have answered it frequently before, we can go ahead and give an explanation and examples that will satisfy the immediate needs of the student or students who are having the problem. The structures we have to discuss in class do not come out of the blue but from student errors and are often recurrent problems, so we often have already developed an explanation ourselves or borrowed one from textbooks or reference books that we have used before to successfully explain the topic.

Situation 2 : If we have not answered a particular question before and are not able to rely on a "standard lecture", we can do one of two things.

Choice 1: First, if we feel confident about our ability to think on our feet and explain the topic well, we can plunge right in. We do this, hoping for the best, depending on our quick wit, knowledge of the English language, and analytical skills to allow us to offer a useful explanation.

Overhead 5

What we do:

1. If we know the answer:

   Explain right away, sometimes using "standard lecture".

2. If we do not know or have not answered question before:

   A. Attempt explanation.

   B. Postpone explanation.

The immediate task in this situation is to do something "quick and dirty", that is, provide a simple analysis which will get the point across efficiently. I think that this can be a moment of panic for teachers, but it need not be. Whatever information we give the students can be augmented later.

In order to be successful in giving a spontaneous answer, teachers need to take what I would call a "time out" - that is, to stop what we are doing in the class, take a deep breath, and step away mentally from whatever activity has been going on. At times, what is discussed during the time out may be quite different from what the class has been working on.

What happens during this time out?

SEE OVERHEAD 6

1) Teachers must first realize and accept the fact that the information they provide for students may not satisfy everyone 100%. That should not faze us because we can add more information later. We can make it clear to the students that this is useful information but is not necessarily the end of the story.

2) We must alert the students to the fact that we are about to examine and discuss a structure that may cause problems for them, they need to understand it, and they really ought to pay attention and think about and talk about what is going on.

3) Next, we must identify the problem. We can let the students help us out here. If they are forced to focus on the topic and think it through, and we don't just supply some information for them to scribble

Overhead 6

"Time out"

1. Accept limitations of explanation.
2. Alert students to importance of discussion.
3. Identify problem with students.
4. Analyze structure and understand intended meaning.
5. Pinpoint cause of problem.
6. Make generalizations about structure and give examples.
7. Discuss "similar" forms.

down in their notebooks, it may all seem more important to them, they might pay better attention, and the information might sink in better. Additionally, if they work through a methodical analysis with us, they may realize that they can do this sort of thing by themselves to some degree.

4) Next, we must give ourselves the time to look at the structure carefully to be sure we know what it is we want to explain. We should not be afraid to work slowly and thoughtfully. If we can gather our thoughts, we are less likely to shoot off in the wrong direction and have to start over again or give a less than adequate explanation. If the question has emerged from student work, we must be sure we know what the student's intended meaning was in the first place so we are discussing the correct problem. We can do this by talking with the students, asking questions about what they are trying to say, paraphrasing what we think they are saying and going on from there.

SEE OVERHEAD 7

5) Then we have to pinpoint the problem area; we try to break down the structure to see what it is we need to repair.

SEE OVERHEAD 8

6) The students need to understand that the choices they make in vocabulary determine what comes next. You learn a word and you learn what goes with it. We must make our students realize that as soon as they start thinking of "say" and "tell", etc. as synonyms, they are setting themselves up for problems because they must have control

Overhead 7

Example[1]: (At the laundromat)

Student writes: "Make sure your money."

Teacher : "Make sure that your money...is ready ?"

Student : "Enough money."

Teacher : "Do you mean be sure you have enough money, the correct amount of money? Or do you mean be sure you have the money with you?"

Student : "Correct amount."

Teacher : "O.K. I understand your idea but let me help you find a different (read 'better') way to say it so everyone will understand."

---

[1]Generated by an exercise in Basic Composition for ESL by Huizinga, Snellings & Francis

Overhead 8

(Teacher wonders: "Hmm. What is wrong with this? 'Make sure WHAT?' What can I put after 'make sure'? O.K., 'make sure' has to be followed by a clause, not a noun.")

Teacher : "You could say 'Make sure that you have the correct amount of money or that you have the correct change.' You have to put a noun clause with a subject and a verb after "make sure". You can put in 'that' if you want to; it's optional."

Alternatively:

(Teacher wonders: "Hmm. What's wrong with this? WHAT your money? I could say "check your money" or "get your money ready".)

Teacher : "O.K. "Let's use another verb; try 'check your money' or 'get your money ready.'"

of the syntactic information of these "lemmas" as well as the semantic information.

We can now make some generalizations about the forms we have been discussing, that is, restrictions on how they behave in a sentence. We can now also offer alternative correct sentences, giving students the liberty to choose among them. This way they retain control of the expression of their ideas and it is still their writing, not the teacher's.

SEE OVERHEAD 9

This will not always be perfect. We may make false starts. For example, halfway through writing a sample sentence on the board we may realize that it does not fit the pattern or isn't even correct.

SEE OVERHEAD 10

I think it is important that the example sentences be as parallel in form as possible. The goal is to show a set of examples in which the lexical item behaves in a certain way. If there are other differences in the sentences, they can force other rearranging or replacing. I also feel that too much information is as harmful as too little. Students are trying hard enough to understand what you are talking about and get frustrated and overwhelmed if there are too many different troublesome items in the sentence.

7) After this, students often lead us to another step by asking questions about other semantically or syntactically similar forms. "Well, what about such and such?" These questions can be a good source of contrastive material because students believe that such and such are somehow "the same" as what you've been talking about. This

Overhead 9

"Make sure + NOUN CLAUSE"

"Make sure that you have your money."

"Make sure that you have enough money."

"Make sure that you have the correct amount of money."

"Check + NOUN PHRASE"

"Check your money."

"Check+ CLAUSE"

"Check that you have your money."

"Check that you have enough money"

"Check that you have the correct amount of money."

"Check and see that you have enough money."

"Check to be sure (that) you have ...."

Etc.

Overhead 10

False start:

Teacher writes: "Make sure of..."

(Teacher wonders: "WHAT? Your money? No. Your sources? Maybe. Hmm. I'm not sure putting that in is going to be useful. Never mind!")

provides us with material to show differences among supposedly similar words or structures. We can now generate example sentences to show similarities and differences in behavior of and restrictions on lexical items that students thought were equivalent.

Although students can be dismayed that there are sometimes so many ways to express one idea, or that what they thought were similar or identical forms behave differently, we, on the other hand, are provided with plenty of material to use to illustrate our point.

Earlier I mentioned having to explain the use of "say" and "tell". We can use a discussion of the use of these words as an example here. When we are explaining the
se words, students almost inevitably ask about the use of "speak" and "talk" also. Let's look at a quick little analysis of "say/tell/speak/talk". It should be a breeze to explain how we use these words. First let's look at "speak" and "talk".

SEE OVERHEAD 11

It looks like the use of "speak" and "talk" is fairly straightforward and easy to explain.

Now let's look at "say" and "tell".

SEE OVERHEAD 12

Your eyes are probably crossing by now. And what do those little numbers mean? As I kept thinking of additional correct forms, I had to revise what I was writing three times - each number refers to a separate round of revision. You can imagine how students would react when you put this rather messy little chart on the blackboard, adding

Overhead 11

Example:

speak (to someone) (about something):
"I'll speak to them tomorrow about the election."
"I'll speak to them tomorrow."
"I'll speak about the election."

talk (to someone) (about something):

ditto

Overhead 12

1 1 1 2
say (something) (to someone) (about
3 1
something/someone)/(to someone)((that)+noun clause):

4 4
(something) (about something/someone) (to someone)

1 1 1
"I'll say something to them about the election."
"I'll say something to them."
"I'll say something about the election."
"I'll say something about the election to them."

1 1
"I'll say to them that the election was rigged."
"I'll say that the election was rigged.

4 4 4
"I'll say something about the election to them."

1 1 1
tell : someone ((2that) noun clause/noun phrase/about something

"I'll tell someone that the election was rigged."
"I'll tell someone the election was rigged."
"I'll tell someone the truth about the election."
"I'll tell someone about the rigging of the election."

and moving information. This shows you why an "on the spot" explanation can be difficult at times. It turns out that the analysis of "say/tell/speak/talk" is not so simple after all if you are going to present all the permutations you can think of for these words, and who knows what I've left out!. The correct use of "say" and "tell" may be a good example of topic that we should go back to our offices to prepare before laying it out in front of our students. In fact, in my mind, doing just that is a viable alternative for teachers. And this is our Choice 2.

Choice 2 : I believe that when we do not feel we are ready to give the students a solid, accurate explanation of a structure, it is prudent to postpone answering a question and discussing a topic until we ourselves have formulated a good analysis of the forms, using the same sort of procedure I illustrated earlier.

Although it can be difficult, it is important for us to be able to say to our students, "That's a good question, but I'm not going to answer it right now. Let me think about it first so I can give you a good answer that will be helpful to you." We may have to train ourselves to do this with aplomb. A pause or return to a topic does not indicate incompetence. If teachers are able to postpone an explanation with grace and obvious confidence, students will trust that we are indeed knowledgeable and not simply trying to slide out of an uncomfortable situation. We, of course, have to come back with the information we have promised if we are to maintain this trust.

We may fear postponing an explanation will diminish the respect our students have for us as teachers and ultimate authorities on English. I think that this need not be so if we present the delay as beneficial to the students. We are, in fact, doing the students a service by taking time out to think through a careful and accurate explanation. It is better to explain well later than to explain right away but do it badly.

Recommendations

SEE OVERHEAD 13

I. How we can help our students:

1) Students are frustrated because they know they cannot learn all the forms in English. They must be made to understand that they do not need to do this; they need to be able to produce only a number of basic pattens that are commonly used and that will always be correct. They need to be able to recognize others they will hear and read that express the same idea. As their fluency develops, they can add more structures to their repertoire, but meanwhile they can stay out of trouble by using the structures they are confident about.

2) Students should try to make connections between what they have learned about particular items in class and the way they are used in "real English." They should review the information given in class, and even bring what they have found in authentic material back to class to talk about some more.

Overhead 13

Recommendations for students

1. Differentiate between production and recognition needs.
2. Recognize and review forms as used in authentic material.

Recommendations for teachers

1. Accept our limitations.
2. Involve students in explanation.
3. Revise our explanation.
4. Limit information.
5. Individualize explanation.
6. Work with authentic materials.

II. How we can help ourselves:

1) We should remember that no matter what level our expertise, we can all furnish our students with information and strategies for learning the language.

2) We can load some of the responsibility of learning about the structures we discuss on the students' shoulders. They must participate actively in the analysis. We can set them up for this early in the semester by making it clear that the class will be a discussion of various topics. "We are going to talk about such and such."

3) We should feel free to revise our explanations as other information comes up later that has to fit into what we have told our students, and to repair our own errors or misleading information we have given. We can say," I need to give you some more information about Topic X that will help you understand it better."

4) We should limit the amount of information we give about a topic, giving students what is useful and necessary at the moment. We can come back later with more information as the need arises.

5) We can individualize our instruction or the amount and kind of information we give, depending on our audience.

6) We can also look at authentic materials with the students, textbooks or other, depending upon their eventual goals, and find examples of the structure being examined. We can then discuss how these are similar or different from the patterns we have described.

This will show students how they can use what they have learned in class to analyze, understand and replicate correct forms they will encounter.

Conclusion

It is clear that one important thing that our students need to know is the that words come with syntax attached. We have talked about some of the resources available and acknowledged that the they may be difficult for students to understand. Most of the responsibility for clarification of this information falls on the teachers.

If we show our students that we are thoughtful and thorough in our teaching, they will have confidence in us as teachers who are concerned about their learning, their progress, and their success.

HANDOUT

BEYOND VOCABULARY: WHAT'S NEW IN THE LEXICON?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Chomsky, N. 1986. *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use.* New York: Praeger.

Cook, V. J. 1988. *Chomsky's Universal Grammar: An Introduction.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Levelt, W. J. M. 1989. *Speaking: From Intention to Articulation.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

EXAMPLES OF ERRORS

Verb + Preposition (and less frequently, Adjective + Preposition, Noun + Preposition)

Preposition omitted

When I arrived America two years ago
They can also cooperate each other.
We need to compensate the hardship of learning.
People should know each way of life by communicating each other.
To decide a certain life goal is very difficult thing.
He told the king to listen them.
People will object the trouble maker.
This event warned people to prevent such disaster happen later. (change in verb form also needed)
All the difficulty cannot stop me to move. (change in verb form also needed)

Wrong preposition

Once they had meeting to discuss on a program.
I will get my Ph.D. and after devote myself in research.

Preposition used where it should not be

We have the power to face to reality.
I have attended to a seminar.

Adjective + wrong Preposition

Some parts we're not very glad with.

Noun + wrong Preposition

an instructor on organic chemistry

Money is important indicator what you have achieved in life.

Transitive vs. Intransitive Verbs

Direct object omitted

I can give the reason why I choose.

He sat on his throne and began to regret.

People who know the traditional customs doesn't teach to us.

Nobody wants to enjoy with him.

Direct object used with intransitive verb

The airplane crashed the mountain.

The fishermen from several harbours didn't fish anything at all.

Intransitive verb used as passive

My purpose of living is coincided with an old Chinese idiom.

They were anxious about an accident which might be happened.

It is depended on the situation.

The poor man is disappeared.

The princess was died with the baby.

Passive stative verb used as intransitive

There is a small country which locates far away in the north.

Indirect Objects

Dative movement should be blocked

I said you "good morning."

Explain me how to do this problem.

Causatives

It's science that makes the world we live developed so rapidly.

The government will either lead the country well or caused the country into poor country.

I think about what makes me being trapped.

Verb + Complements

Make sure your money.
They prefer their idol is a member of a gang.
I like study new language.
As to me, I hated drive car.
I hope never use it.
There is one issue that scientist believe as the cause of the problem.

Connectors

I love to play it in spite of its popularity has gone.
Because that I want to create something.
No matter the book was a story.

SELECTED REFERENCES

Dictionaries

Hornby, A. S. 1974. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. London: Oxford University Press.

[Identifies 25 Verb Patterns, which are referred to in the definitions. Most definitions include one or more phrases or sentences which provide examples of contextualized use.]

Longman Dictionary of American English. 1983. Longman Inc.

[Includes usage notes on words that are easily confused, e.g., *died/dead, wish/hope, say/tell*; also full sentences as examples of nearly every definition. Workbook is available.]

Reference Grammars and Handbooks

Burt, M. K., and C. Kiparsky. 1972. *The Gooficon: A Repair Manual for English*. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.

[No longer in print, this useful handbook consists of a short selection of typical syntactic errors of ESL learners along with "pedagogical notes" which suggest techniques and explanations for the classroom.]

Celce-Murcia, M. and D. Larsen-Freeman. 1983. *The Grammar Book*. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House.

[For teachers, an introduction to some terminology of lexical and syntactic patterns of English. Each chapter concludes with some suggestions for teaching the structures.]

Crowell, T. Y. 1964. *The Index to Modern English*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

[This handbook gives copious examples and brief explanations of correct usage, organizing them into sections of typical errors made by learners, especially in written American English. The

alphabetical arrangement requires some hunting to locate appropriate sections.]

Quirk-Greenbaum-Leech-Svartvik Books

Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, and J. Svartvik. 1972. *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. London: Longman Group Ltd.

[An 1100-page compendium of syntactic patterns in the "common core of educated English" (p. v). A teacher with knowledge of the meta-language of grammatical terminology could find good explanations and examples here, even some examples of erroneous usage marked by an asterisk. For example:]

(p. 731) " That's the man *that saw me* <-> * That's the man *saw me*.
Contrast:
That's the man *that I saw* <-> That's the man *I saw*. "

Quirk, R. and S. Greenbaum. 1973. *A Concise Grammar of Contemporary English*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

[A short, less detailed version of Quirk et al., 1972.]

Leech, Geoffrey, and Jan Svartvik. 1975. *A Communicative Grammar of English*. London: Longman Group, Ltd.

[This book is keyed to the sections in Quirk, et al., 1972. The most useful are Part Three, "Grammar in Use," which is somewhat notional-functional in arrangement, and Part Four, "Grammatical Compendium," which is arranged alphabetically by structure. The amount of infomation in this book is overwhelming for learners; there is too much in a format that is too compact. However, for teachers there are many useful examples and caveats. For example:]

§836 (p. 297)
"We have distinguished six basic verb patterns in English...Within each basic verb pattern, we can distinguish a varying number of sub-patterns, which are numbered [T1], [T2], etc.

"In various senses, the same verb can sometimes occur in different basic verb patterns."

§837 (p. 297)
"Although we can state the different verb patterns, it is not possible to list here all the verbs which can occur in each pattern. For this you will need to consult a dictionary..."

Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, and J. Svartvik. 1985. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman Group Ltd.

[An updated version of their 1972 compendium.]

Greenbaum, S. and R. Quirk. 1990. A Student's Grammar of the English Language. London: Longman.

[A shorter, less detailed version of Quirk et al., 1985.]

Grammar Textbooks

Azar, B. S. 1989. *Understanding and Using English Grammar*, 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents. [with Workbooks and Teacher's Guide]

[The textbook's charts and the Teacher's Guide's notes point out some of the problematic patterns that can underlie learners' errors. Most chapters include error correction exercises, where students identify typical syntactic errors and suggest corrections.]

Raimes, Ann. 1988. *Grammar Troublespots: An Editing Guide for ESL Students*. St. Martin's Press.

[A useful book for some purposes, it does not deal with most of the errors or pitfalls mentioned in this presentation. Tends to state one or more rules with a list of relevant vocabulary, but gives no hint of the trouble caused by choosing one word rather than another from the given list. For example:]

p. 86: (Troublespot 19) Reporting and Paraphrasing

"observe the following conventions: . . .

"4. After an introductory verb in the past (like *said*), use past-tense verbs for the reported speech...

"8. Do not use the same introductory verb every time. Introductory verbs include *say, ask, tell someone to ..., reply, complain, advise someone to ..., want to know*, and others."

Steer, J. M., and K. A. Carlisi. 1991. *The Advanced Grammar Book*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

[Format is similar to Azar's. This is one of the very few textbooks that includes some lexical-syntactic patterns. Includes error correction exercises, based on typical misapplication of patterns.]

For example, for transitive/intransitive verb errors (p. 94):

"When parents are growing up their kids, they should teach them about good nutrition."